

Advisory Council on Aging and Disability Services

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Creating choices for elders and adults with disabilities in Seattle-King County
www.advisorycouncil.org

MARCH 12, 2004

ADVISORY COUNCIL Meeting

Present John Barnett, Adam John, Thelma Pegues, Martha Becker, Joanne Brekke, Gabe Cohen, Thelma Coney, John Holecek, Larry Low, Don Moreland, Will Parry, Helen Spencer, Alexandra Tu, Suzanne Wiley, Larry Verhei and Lisa Yeager

Excused Timmie Faghin and Cleo Corcoran

Absent Steve Colwell and Tom Ramussen

Guests Marc Avni, Dr. Bob Gross, Nancy Hagen, Catherine Wu, Pat Melgar and Marta Vega

ADS Staff Pam Piering, Rosemary Cunningham, Karen Winston, Margaret Casey, Ozell Bledsoe and Linda Wells

United Way Staff Linda Woodall

DRAFT MINUTES

Gabe Cohen, Vice-Chair convened the Advisory Council meeting at 12:00 p.m. He asked everyone in attendance to introduce themselves. He reviewed the order of the agenda and asked for any changes. Gabe introduced speakers, **Allison Peake** and **Mary Conway**, Community Outreach Representatives and Aides to Senator Patty Murray. He also introduced **Eileen Murphy**, Deputy Director, Senior Services Information & Assistance Program.

Approval of Minutes

Action Taken: It was moved/seconded and passed that the February 13, 2004 minutes be approved after adding Council member Adam John as present for the meeting.

Program Topic

Medicare, Prescription Drugs and The Pharmacy Connections Program

Mary Conway provided information about Senate Bill 2568, *The MediFair Act*, proposed by Senator Patty Murray, designed to restore access and fairness to Medicare and to also increase Washington State's Medicare reimbursement rate. Because of the unfair way in which Medicare reimburses doctors and providers Washington State seniors can expect far less access and far fewer benefits than seniors in other states because Medicare reimbursement rates vary state by state. These regional inequities have resulted in vastly different levels of care and access to care. For example, in Florida a lot of Medicare beneficiaries have access to prescription drugs and prescription eyeglasses in their Medicare Plus Choice program. In Washington State there are no open plans available that offer prescription drug coverage or eyeglasses because of Washington

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State's low reimbursement rates. The MediFair Act is designed to restore access and fairness to Medicare by eliminating the regional inequities in Medicare. Mary also reported on Senator Murray's efforts to increase federal funding under Medicaid.

Allison Peake provided information about Senator Patty Murray's position on Prescription Drugs including a plan passed by the Senate to restructure the Medicare program. She reported this new law is a gift to HMOs, drug companies and insurers, but is a bad deal for Washington's seniors and although there are provisions in the bill that are important, like increased payments for doctors and rural healthcare providers, the bill does not come close to what is needed for Washington State seniors. It would still saddle seniors with high out-of-pocket costs, while providing a meager drug benefit and make fundamental changes to the Medicare system, by forcing seniors to pay higher premiums to stay in the traditional Medicare program. She also reported that Senator Murray believes the only way seniors can avoid higher premiums is by switching from Medicare to private insurance. She also warned that as this bill begins to take effect over the next several years, seniors themselves will feel the pinch.

Eileen Murphy presented information about the Pharmacy Connections Program, a State funded program which helps seniors and persons with disabilities meet their medication needs. Additional benefits of the program include the fact that: several pharmaceutical companies offer discount cards for eligible consumers, certain consumer groups provide subscribers with discounts on brand name and generic drugs, drug manufacturers have Patient Assistance Programs that provide no cost or low cost drugs for those who can't afford their medicines, and some non-profit disease or disability organizations may offer assistance in funding drugs needed by their constituencies. Eileen also noted that the Pharmacy Connections Program also provides consumers with information and assistance accessing public and private programs which will save them money on some or all of their prescription drugs. The program can be accessed by calling toll-free 1-888-435-3377 from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday through Friday.

Old Business

Election of Nominating Committee:

Action Taken: It was moved/seconded and passed the **2004 Nomination Committee** members are approved as elected:

Cleo Corcoran, City of Seattle

Gabe Cohen, King County

Suzanne Wiley, United Way

Outcome Vote on 2004 meeting topics:

Members voted on eight priority topic areas for 2004 Advisory Council meetings including: **1)** Mental Health/Dementia/the PEARLS Program, **2)** Native American Elder Issues and Cultural Competency, **3)** Prescription Drugs (Senior Services I & A Outreach), **4)** Chronic Disease Management/Prevention & Wellness and Addictions (HEP), **5)** Meeting with Elected Officials, **6)** Low Income Senior Housing Availability and Housing for Chronic Substance Abusers, **7)** Seattle Police Department Curriculum/Elder Abuse/Gate Keepers (especially in rural areas), **8)** Adult Day Care/Health, and **9)** 2004 Budget Changes & 2005-06 Allocations.

New Business

New member orientation, assignment of mentors:

The first item on the agenda concerned new member orientation and the recommendation to assign each new member with a mentor. Two possible dates for new member orientation were proposed for members to approve:

Monday, May 17th from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Monday, October 18th from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

A suggestion from the floor was to have mentors and those they mentor attend the same orientation meeting so that each hears the same information, and afterward can talk about what they just heard. A question from the floor: "Who makes the choices for mentor assignment?" This question was not answered.

Report from 2005 Retreat Committee:

Helen Spencer a member of the Retreat Planning Committee, wished to share her suggestions with the Council. She proposed:

1. The retreat be held at the Auburn Senior Center
2. Have the lunch at the Nutrition Program, and have the staff pay the visitor price amount
3. Offer the senior high school students at Auburn High School the opportunity to volunteer with retreat in order to fulfill a portion of their required community service credits
4. Bring in a trained professional to teach the attendees relaxation techniques
5. Reserve a portion of the retreat agenda for a training on contracts, i.e. how they are selected and what is involved in monitoring them
6. Following the example of the 2004 retreat, have a gift exchange, only this time have the gifts be the talents and expertise of the individual members
7. Reserve a portion of the time to discuss grants and fund development that is ongoing in ADS

One visitor to the meeting suggested the retreat agenda also include the chance to self-evaluate the role and effectiveness of the Council.

Committee and Task Force Reports

State Council on Aging:

Joanne Brekke reported: 1] The Pierce County legal service office is closing; 2] the Pierce County Advisory Council is adopting a senior center, which may be something this AC might want to consider; 3] Snohomish County has been selected by the State to conduct an experimental Medicaid Managed-Care Pilot Project, integrating drug, alcohol and mental health services; 4] CMS funded Cash & Counseling Model received a \$250,000 Robert Wood Johnson grant for providing services in one urban and one rural area (sites currently undetermined); and the 5] State unit is self-evaluating its role and effectiveness.

Planning and Allocation Committee:

Thelma Coney reported on the P&A Committee's site visits to two area SHA buildings including: Center House and the Southeast Seattle Senior Center, and P&A Committee members plan to make one site visit each month and they invite Council members to join them.

Joint Meeting - Outreach & Advocacy Committee and Health Care Task Force:

Gabe Cohen reported on the joint Outreach & Advocacy Committee and Healthcare Task Force meeting including Legislative updates regarding: changes in use of language referring to persons with disabilities and an increase in Case Management funding by \$4.5 million dollars. Gabe reported O&A and HCTF members are working to come up with topic suggestions for the Legislative Forum. **Larry Verhei** announced the Health Fair on Saturday, May 22nd from 9:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Hearing / Speech & Deafness Center, 1625 19th Ave, Seattle, WA. He requested the Council sponsor an information booth.

Action Taken: It was moved/seconded and passed that the Advisory Council will sponsor an information booth at the May 22nd Health Fair.

Director's Report

Pam Piering introduced Irene Stewart as the new director of MOSC. She provided updates on the Washington State legislative session issues including a new area, Grandparents Support, which provides services to help them be successful as they raise their grandchildren. She also provided updates of themes on the national level. The Older Americans Act is up for reauthorization, and incorporates the concept of "rebalancing" to get more funding in the community, and elder readiness and planning for the age wave coming in 5 to 10 years. She also noted that an article on the PEARLS Project will appear in the April edition of Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

Day/Date: **Friday, April 16, 2004**

Time: **12:00 – 2:00 p.m.**

Place: **13th Floor Conference Room**

Alaska Building, 618 Second Ave

Seattle, WA 98104

Larry Low, *Secretary* _____ Approved 4/2/04